

SUCCESS STORY

Phoenix Woodworking Corporation

Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center

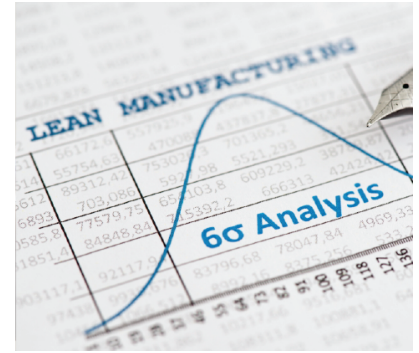
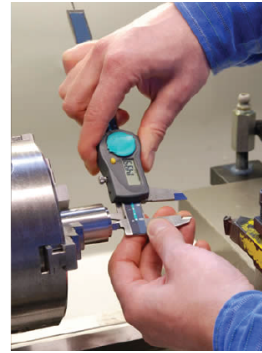
“By teaching us how to do the work ourselves, IMEC gave us the ability to produce more and be more profitable with the same number of people. Their expertise and resources are so valuable for small companies like ours.” Sandra Pierce, President

Woodworking Shop Implements Lean, Cut Costs

ABOUT. Phoenix Woodworking is a manufacturer that produces custom architectural millwork and casework and cabinetry for medical office buildings, hospitals, educational facilities, golf clubs, and municipal buildings. Located in Woodstock, Illinois, Phoenix Woodworking employs 20 people.

THE CHALLENGE. Phoenix Woodworking lost much of its residential business during the recession and faced rising costs and debts. After a tour of the manufacturing facility, Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC), a NIST MEP affiliate, suggested Phoenix Woodworking might benefit from implementing Lean Manufacturing concepts. “As manufacturers, we sometimes get a false sense of security that we always know the right way to do the job,” said Sandra Pierce. “IMEC showed us other opportunities. They brought us expertise and resources, trained us in methods we never would have known, taught us how to be more efficient and made a real difference in our business.”

MEP’S ROLE. After IMEC presented an overview of Lean concepts to the company’s management team, company leaders began to bring problems to the forefront, with IMEC suggesting opportunities for improvement and developing an implementation plan. Employees came together for a Lean training session, and IMEC made a point to assign each individual a responsibility, promising to return in a month to check on progress. “It really brought our entire organization together,” said Pierce. IMEC helped Phoenix Woodworking put tools in place to track everything from payroll to material costs to rework. When analysis revealed incorrect measurements in the field, the company purchased a laser-measuring tool to increase accuracy and reduce rework. IMEC also helped the company dispose of excess materials. Pierce credits IMEC with the suggestion to donate excess materials to the local Habitat for Humanity—“a win-win for everyone.”



RESULTS



Reduced overtime from **19** weeks to zero weeks



Scrap reduction efforts led to **3%** drop in material costs



Investment in new equipment, technology and training

NEXT STEPS



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